VIDA CAROLAN;

FATAL BEAUTY. CHAPTER I.

A MOMENTOUS TELEGRAM. The waters in beauty and brightness flow.
While a corpse lies drowned in the depths below.

M. J. FOSTER.

below. M. J. Foster.

"From Pierre Jacquemart, Prefecture
of Paris, to M. Dare Devereux, Carltongardens, London.—Please come at once to
identify body found in Seine. Letter ad-

On a sunny afternoon in June, this telegram was handed to the hall-porter of a house in Carlton-gardens, and he in turn handed it to a footman to be taken to the

paster.
"I don't know if Mr. Devereux is in," said John Thomas, shrugging his shoulders, as he crossed the hall. "One never does know whether he is in or out-he's that erratic."

at erranc. Nevertheless, though telegrams in these days excite no alarm in well regu-lated minds, John Thomas knew better than to dawdle over delivering the mes sage with which he was charged, and proceeded at once in search of Mr. Dev-

ereux.

Selecting the library as the most likely apartment in which to find his master, his sagacity was rewarded, for a soft clear voice responded, "Come in!" to his knock, and John Thomas entering, handed the and John Thomas entering, nanded the telegram to a very handsome, aristocrat-ic-looking young man who was lounging in an arm-chair, reading "Horace." "A telegram! Thanks," said he, rather

in an arm-enair, reading
"A telegram? Thanks," said he, rather
listlessly, and turned another page,
scarcely glancing at the little missive;
but in a few moments he laid down "Horbut in a few moments he laid down "Hore" and took up the telegram.
"From Paris!" he muttered, and he opened the envelope quickly.

The sentence was never finished. One The sentence was never finished. One glance of the large, quick blue eyes had taken in the whole message, and the young man sprang to his feet with a smothered cry, and the white fingers that had lingered carelessly over the pages of "Horace," were locked as if in mortal agony. "Parsival Claramont!" "Percival Claremont!"

The name fell from his quivering lips The name fell from his quivering lips like the echo of a long-present thought, and for an instant he stood motionless, paralyzed by the shock of the fearful conviction forced upon him by that brief, grim telegram, enclosing in a few words a life's history and a tragedy.

But only for an instant. The next Dare Deversury had surpose to the door, and in

Devereux had sprung to the door, and in another moment was in his dressinganother mome

"Ellis," he said quickly to his astonished valet, "I must cross to Calais to-night. Read this telegram. I shall start in an hour-to catch the boat-train."

Ellis, who had been in his master's service since he left Eton, needed no more, In an hour and a half Dare Devereux was whirling down to Dover as fast as express whirling down to Dover as fast as express speed could take him.

It was laid in the Morgue for curious At was laid in the morgine for curious eyes to gaze upon, and morbid fancies to conjecture what sin or suffering could have made life too heavy a burden for this stalwart, well-to-do Englishman; for the stalwart, well-to-do Englishman; for the dead man's clothes were of fine broad-cloth, and his linen of finest qualities. His features bore the hall-mark of gentle blood, and the smooth, soft-skinned hands had done no rough work.

The body was taken out of the Seine two nights ago, near the Pont Royal. There was nothing to identify it save the letter addressed to M. Devereux, and none of the police who saw the corpuse could

of the police who saw the corpse could recall the features. The Englishman was evidently a stranger in Paris, nor did the

o remove the body to England,

and this he we printted to do.

Not know to whom the dead man alluded! Too well Dare Devereux knew, but the secret should be locked in his own breast. His hand and no other should

own breast. His hand and no other should avenge Percival Claremont.

A few days later Percival Claremont was buried in the churchyard of his native village, far away in wild Cornwall—buried at night with none to mourn by his grave but Dare Devereux and a distant consist. ant cousin.

There was no will, and Dare Devereux who had so passionately loved the dead man—who so loved him still—had no memento of him but that letter found on the suicide.

Was Percival Claremont a suicide?

CHAPTER II.

HESTER RANSOME'S GUEST

While Vengeance, in the lurid air Lifts her red arm, exposed and bare.

A blaze of light, repeated in lofty mirrors; the glow of crimson on furniture and draperies and flower-strewn velvet and draperies and nower-strewn velvet carpets; rich lace, veiling in graceful folds open windows, through which was wafted the scent of flowers; soft and varied hues of female drapery; soft mur-mur of verses; mey's and varied hues of female drapery; soft mur-mur of voices; men's and women's com-mingled, and merry, but not noisy, laugh-ter—all this formed an harmonisus whole that might well chain eye and ear.

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In this salon of a handsome house in the Parc Monceau, a company of perhaps twenty men and women had met together this June evening, as they had met often before, not only for social intercourse, it would seem, for though there was plenty of conversation, and very charming conversation, for the most part in charming French, there was another occupation going on which absorbed at least as much attention, indeed a good deal more, than attention, indeed a good deal more, than the latest gossip about Bernhardt, or the last new piece at the Palais Royal or Renaissance, and this occupation was card-playing; and if you looked at the company closely you would see that it was somewhat curiously constituted. At a small table near one of the wind-ows playing coatta with a wealthy would be a small table near one of the wind-

At a small table near one of the wind-ows, playing scarte with a wealthy mar-quis, an actress of the Opera Comique, and a Hebrew member of the Bourse, the "friend" of pretty Mdle. Trois Etoiles—at least, so said rumor—sat the mistress of this private gambling saton, the hand-some Englishwoman who was so well some Englishwoman who was so well known at Monaco, Baden, and elsewhere Madame Hester Ransome.

madame Hester Ransome.

Some cynics doubted if there had ever been a Mr. Ransome, but of course Madame's daughter must be accounted for.—

This little girl had never yet made an appearance in the salon; but was reported to be a remarkably beautiful child.

Hester Ransome was included.

Hester Ransome was perhaps thirty-five or six; a tall woman, neither stout nor slight, but robust; a handsome woman nor slight, but robust; a handsome woman without doubt, and yet hardly, one would have thought, the kind of woman to have any very potent influence over men. Of this Hester Ransome, however, more anon. Suffice it now to add that she dressed as faultlessly as any Parisian, snoke French with very little foreign accent, and was an inimitable hostess.

Madame had a heap of gold beside her. She was a lucky hand at all games of chance—a very lucky hand.

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"I marvel," she observed presently,

"In marvel," she observed presently,

"that M. Saint-Marc is not here to-night. "that M. Saint-Marc is not here to-night. He asked to bring with him a young English friend whom he did not name. I expected him earlier."

"Does his friend play?" asked the marquis, to whom the hostess had addressed

quis, to whom the hostess had activated herself.

"Ah, I do not know. He is of noble birth, and wealthy. I know no more. Listen! some carriage has stopped without. Perhaps it is M. Saint-Marc's coupe."

In a few moments conjecture was set at rest, for the door was opened wide, and a man-servant announced:

She turned to Devereux with a bright Miss, or Molle. Carolan ?" smile.
"Will monsieur try his luck?" she

asked.

The young man looked her straight in the face and replied coolly:

"Merc, madame, I must decline to try issues with so skillful an opponent."

"Nay, monsieur, you may have better luck; do not envy me mine."

"Heaven forbid, madame, that I should envy you your luck! I would rather lose all I possess than win it by such fuck' as yours."

The effect of these uncompromising words, spoken with deliberate emphasis.

words, spoken with deliberate emphasis, was electrical. All sprang to their feet.
Madame Ransome recoiled with blanched check and a mingled fear and defiance in her eyes. "Espion." "scelerat," were freely bandied about; but glances of perplexity and wonder were exchanged.

plexity and wonder were exchanged, too The marquis walked up to Devereux. "Monsieur, you have made a monstrous accusation against a lady, your hostess; you are bound to prove it, or to retract it."

Madame Ransome stood erect, looking Madame Kansome stood erect, looking straight before her, but uttering not a word. Dare Devereux seemed the most self-possessed person in the room.

"I owe," he said quietly, "an apology to M. Saint-Marc, to whose kindness I am indebted for my introduction to this salon; and to him I will presently, reader.

and to him I will presently render every explanation. But for the accusation I have just made. I owe no apology; I am quite willing—if Madame be willing also—to substantiate my statement."

Everyone looked at Madame Ransome.

The guests gathered warmed her workforch.

The guests gathered round her vociferating, jabbering, as only French people can. Devereux stood haughtily aloof during this pairful scene, and Madame Ransome stood like a tiger at bay, glaring at her accusers with a strange mingling of fear and defiance in her gaze and mien; but she spoke not a word. At length M. Saint-Marc and one or two others succeeded in producing a temporary calm, and Saint-Marc suggested that if Madame refused to clear kerself, it would be better that she should return the money she had won that evening to those who had lost it to her. The guests gathered round her vociferat-

"So be it," she said, speaking for the first time; "and let every one leave my

"No need to tell them, madame," said the Opera Comique lady, with a broad sneer; they would hardly care to remain." sneer; they would hardly care to remain."
They went out, still chattering and gesticulating furiously—all but Saint-Marc and Dare Devereux.
"Monsieur," said Madame Ransome to

the former gentleman, will you withdraw for one moment?"

Saint-Marc bowed and quitted the room Then Hester Ransome turned to Devreux. "M. Dare Devereux, how have I injured

you that you should bring upon me shame and ruin?"

and ruin?"

"I will answer your question by another, madame. Have you already forgotten
Percival Claremont?"

A strange cry broke from the woman's
lips. She reeled lack two or three steps,
but recovering healf almost directly,
said fercely:

but recovering armelf almost directly, said fercely:

"And what was Percival Claremont to you! I did him no wrong!"

"He was my nearest and dearest friend. I loved him better than I loved my life. You ruined him, and drove him to his death."

He turned towards the door. Hester Ransome slepped before him.
"Hold!" she said, and for an instant the "Hod!" she said, and for an instant the black eyes of the woman, the deep-blue eyes of the man, met full. "Is it to be war to the knife between you and me!" "War to the knife," he answered steadily.

She drew back. "War to the knife then be it," she said

-thank goodness!" "Miss—thank goodness!" There's a chance for you, my boy. No, not Mad-emoiselle—she is English, she says—but she might be French, Italian, or German, or all three together, for she speaks all those languages as well as she does Eng-lish—almost better——"

"Pon my word, Summers, you arouse me to a fatiguing amount of interest. Go on—I am all ears. Tell me all you know about this mysterious goddess."

about this mysterious goddess."

"She's eccentric—unconventional—Bohemian—what you will," continued Laurence. She lives in Hertford-street in good style, practically almost alone, for there is no one living with her but an old duenna, and those sort of old ladies are as much a blind as a protection, in nine cases out of ten. Still, Vida Carolan has been taken up by the swells—are rather. I cases out of ten. Shin, your carolan has been taken up by the swells—or rather, I had almost said, she has taken them up. How? Ask the Delphic oracles, my dear boy, for I can't tell you. They say she is of good West Country family. She is sertainly of gentle blood; on that point there can be no doubt. She is highly cultivated, plays expledible. They say she is ed, plays splendidly, and everyone runs er her-even the beauties, who her.'

"By Jove!" said the Hon. Rokeby, "I "By Jover said the Hon. Rokeby, "I must get an introduction. There won't be any difficulty about that." "Oh, dear no. I met her only the other day at Mrs. Staunton's 'at home.' I'll in-

ers thanked his friend, and turned

Dany ers thanked his Friend, and turned to look at the crowd with more interest than he had previously displayed. He was seeking the new star that had suddenly shone forth on the London world. "What does Dare Devereux say of the new beauty?" asked Danvers, after a short

"He hasn't seen her yet. He has been "He hasn't seen her yet. He has been abroad ever since last June, and only returns to London on Monday next. Hist!" he suddenly grasped the other's arm, "there she is—by Jingo—coming this way. You'll see her better in a minute. We shall see here just as well as anywhere else though just as well as anywhere

else, though just now your paragon is hidden by the mob."

"She'll show up presently. I think she is with Sir Thomas and Lady Marvyn—I thought I saw them just now close by her."

On came the crowd slowly, paying no more attention to the pictures than if there had been none to look at, but all directing their attention to the one recting their attention to the one tall, slender girl in the midst, who moved forward unconcernedly, talking to her companions, exchanging salutes with those she knew, and either superbly indifferent to the homage of which she was too conspicuously the object for the possibility of unconsciousness, or possessing in a consummate degree the art of assuming indifference.

And so at last she drew near the spot where stood the Hon. Rokeby Danvers

where stood the Hon. Rokeby Danvers and his friend, and Danvers drew in his breath with a quick muttered:
"Heavens!—what beauty. The girl is picture."
"Isn't itf I am so glad," added Lady
Marvyn, "that Lady Mansfield has asked
you on Thursday: Her garden parties
are ao delightful, and she expects one
person whom I am sure you will like."

divine! A tall, slim, supple form, perfectly A tall, slim, supple form, perfectly graceful in bearing and movement; an oval face, with a pale, dark skin as clear as opal, the brow broad and full, the large eyes of dark, reddish hazel shining though long black upward-curling lashes; delicate red lips at once firm and mobile, showing as they smiled glimpees of glittering little white teeth, a wealth of dark chestnut hair clustering in short curle over the nobly balanced head, and low enough on the forehead to soften its results. enough on the forehead to soften its mas culine development of intellectual power, but not too low to conceal that unique evidence of mental force; these were the el-ements—in general terms—that made up the remarkable whole, known in the London world as Vida Carolan.

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the remarkable whole, known in the London world as Vida Carolan.

Her dress was simple, but artistic; a cavalier hat of old-gold satin with sweeping plumes, and a dress of black velvet, with lace puffs to the sleeves. There was rich lace about her throat, but no stephanotis ment save a bunch of maidenhair fern worn almost on the left shoulder.

While Rokeby Danvers gazed on this beautiful picture in admiration so pro-found that he forgot all about politeness, Summers hastened forward to claim ac-

Miss Carolan turned to him at holding out her hand with a smile of rare

"How has the world used you, Mr. Summers, since I saw you last?" she said, and both her intonation and accent betrayed the habit of speaking foreign languages. "Were you not on the Row yesguages. "Were you not on the now yes-terday?" I thought I saw you in the dis-

"11 had been there, anss Carolan, a must have seen you," with a bow. "Very fair," said she, laughing. "I think some of you men get up a kind of a stock list of compliments, and you are pretty safe to have one for every occasion; if something quite out of the common ocyou are nonplussed. Isn't that

ly, "in some cases the potency of the in-

"Quite enough, thank you. One cannot "Quite enough, thank you. One cannot live on sugar and puff paste, Mr. Summers, though they are very well in their way; so please give me something better, or I shall forget my manners and beg you to carry your compliments elsewhere."

"I ere you mere, and in proof of your

Poor Rokeby Danvers, who had usually

as he bowed before this superior and girl, and felt almost as shy as he did at his first levee. He was in the seventh heaven, and could not, even in thought,

"Who is that?"

"I dare say you have heard of him—
Dare Devereux, of King's Royal."

The hazel eyes were drooping, and the long veil of lashes sweeping over them gave them a half dreamy, languid expression. There was no apparent change in them; that veil hid the light that leaped up again; no change in the sweet, richtoned voice, as the girl said deliberately:
"No, I do not think I have heard the name before." "No, I name b

resent it when Vida turned sor

prettiest speeches into ridicule, and when he was in the midst of some compliaent asked him, with delicious sang froid, that

asked him, with delicious sang froid, that he thought of such and such a picture or if he worshipped Brune Jones.

"I dare say," she added, on one of the occasions, "you have not studied art extentively; you come to galleries to see the people—not the pictures. Now you are opening your mouth for a very obvious and common-place compliment; please leave it unuttered. I know what it is, and will accept it for as much as it is worth."

worth."

"Miss Carolan, you are toolcruel."

"I am cruel to be kind," she answered.
"I want to teach some of your if I can, that a woman does not want to be told the property of thing.

that a woman does not want to be told every five minutes that she is handsome and adorable, and all that sort of thing. If she is handsome, her glass will tell her so; and if she is not, her vanity will.—Will you try and learn the lesson?"

"I will try and learn anything you may deign to teach me, Miss Carolan."

"You are a very docile pupil. You may deserve a good conduct medal by the end of the season. Lady Marvyn," turning to

of the season. Lady Marvyn," turning to that lady, "is that Whistler you spoke of

that lady, "is that Whistler you spoke of near where we are?"
"No, my dear: but I wanted to introduce you to Lady Mansfield. I saw her a minute ago. Ah, there she is!"
A handsome, middle-aged lady came forward smiling, followed by a fair young girl of perhaps twenty, who looked with frank admiration at graceful Vida Carolan.

olan. "Allow me," said Lady Marvyn, and the introduction was gone through in due form; and Beatrix Mansfield felt quite delighted to know the star, about whom everybody was talking, and who, in phrase suitable to the surroundings, was "quite consummate"

consummate."
"Perhaps, Miss Carolan," said Lady
Mansfield, presently, as they turned back
to make a second promenade of the
rooms, "if you are not engaged, you will
honor my garden-party on Thursday
next."

"I shall be most happy, Lady Mansfield." "Thank you-mind you come early. Lady Marvyn, I want to have you both

"Very well; we will not fail. Vida, my dear, look here. What do you think of this picture? I want to have your opin-

1t was a painting f two gamesters, who seemed, by the evidences of departed guests, to have prolonged their game far beyond reasonable hours. The other fre-

quenters of the salon, a private one mani-festly, had gone, and these two, one of

festly, had gone, and these two, one of them the bost, continued to play, with absorbed faces and hands that trembled with eagerness. She almost held her breath as she gazed on the canvas, and for a moment, one brief flash of time, a look came into the great dark eyes not pleasant to see, a dangerous look; but it passed as she said, with a half laugh: "I wonder which will win? It is a fine picture."

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as they turned away from the picture of the two gamesters, looked back and smiled, and the movement of her lips might almost have seemed to frame again which will win?"

A CRUEL TASK.

In a handsome dressing-room in a wellappointed house in Hertford-street, Mayfair, stood Vida Carolan, resting one foot fair, stood Vida Carolan, resume one according to the rung of a chair which she was tipspoke to the only other occupant of the

Vida was dressed for Lady Mansfield's vida was dressed for Lady and gloves, garden party, all save hat and gloves, which lay ready to be donned when necessary, and her dress of creamy-white mixed with crimson became her as much

Strangely contrasted were the two women who were working for the same end; the one declining towards the old age of an ill-spent life, the other:

Of the sweet eyes into a warm dark dew.

The face of the woman opposite to her should not be an unfamiliar one; we have seen it before in the salon in the Parc Monceas; but the fourteen years that have paissed over Hester Ransome have been years of vicissitude—the life of an adventuress; to-day living in luxury, eating ortolans and drinking Chateau Margot: to-morrow turned out of a lodgweek's rent; and "excess and passion and pain" have done their work to, and left their mark, more cruel and more inef-faceable than any lines of age.

What had wrought this change? Not the years between thirty-six and fifty, but some master-massion that subdendictions.

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some master-passion that subdued, if it could not crush, the lesser passions.

The apparel of this woman seemed to be a disguise, for it did not belong to the rank of life—that of a lady—which she obviously occupied. The black bonnet, laid aside, was shabby and unfashionable,

like the echo of a long-present thought, and for an instant he stood motionless, paralyzed by the shock of the fearful conviction forced upon him by that brief, grim telegram, enclosing in a few words a life's history and a tragedy.

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The body was taken out of the Seine two nights ago, near the Pont Royal. There was nothing to identify it save the letter addressed to M. Detter addressed to M. letter addressed to M. Devereux, and none of the police who saw the corpse could recall the features. The Englishman was evidently a stranger in Paris, nor did the letter afford any clue as to identity, for it bore no signature. One thing it seemed to indicate—that at the time of writing it the suicide had no intention of destroying himself. Was it, then, murder?

Heaven only knew how dear to young Devereux's passionate heart was the man who now lay dead before him.

Five years ago they had parted, and no ne from Claremont had reached Devereux, till the long silence had forced the latter into the belief that his friend was Alas, to know that through these

dead. Alas, to know that through the years of silence he had lived, and died but two days ago—like this!

So soon as the corpse was formally identified, M. Pierre Jacquemart gave identified, M. Pierre Jacquemart his friend. Devereux the letter found on his friend to post. It was a singular fragmentary epistle, and showed the writer to be in a very agitated frame of mind at the time

very agitated frame of mind at the time of writing.

"Friend—more than brother, if I dare still call you so—try to think mercifully of me. Answer me quickly, for I shall not dare to come to you till you teil me I have not destroyed in your heart the power of forgiveness. Why have I been silent all these years? Why have I shunned you? Because I could not face you—you, a lad, I, a man; because I could not endure that you should know me fer the debased villant I am now and have been for so long. No need to teil you that a woman was the tempter, alluring me from a double allegiance. You know her; you heard me speak of her—to condemn her then, though I admired her beauty. To her I have lost all—wealth and honor. No need to say more in writing; you know enough now to almost forgive my silence. I could not shake off the chains that enthralled me; I could not clasp your hand while I feared to meet the gaze that, if it pitted, would scorn me. But now the awakening has come; now I can at least strive to atone for, if I cannot redeem, the past. One even there is more deeply wronged than you—. But I cannot write more. Teil me if I may come to you, to seek, to strive for forgiveness."

The dad man was Mr. Percival Claremont, an Englishman of good family and considerable wealth. He did not know to whom the letter alluded. He could throw no light on the circumstances of Mr.

whom the letter alluded. He could throw no light on the circumstances of Mr. Claremont's death. He did not contradict the remark of one of the officials that Mr. Claremont evidently did not intend to commit suicide when the letter was written, but seemed to have resolved on it later. He only asked that he might be

known at Monaco, Baden, and elsewhere, Madame Hester Ransome. Some cynics doubted if there had

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"Ah, I do not know. He is of noble birth, and wealthy. I know no more. Lis-ten! some carriage has stopped without. Perhaps it is M. Saint-Marc's coupe."

In a few moments conjecture was set at rest, for the door was opened wide, and a nan-servant announced:

"M. de Saint-Marc and M. Devereux. And Madame rose and went forward to receive her guests, and everyone looked up to see who the newcomer might be. A very young man, tall, slender, and strikingly handsome, with curly hair that glittered like gold in the light, and large, brilliant eyes. He was clean shaven,

save for the moustache which shaded a mouth, sensitive enough for a woman but unusually firm even for a strong willed man, and too haughty for a man so young. As he bowed and answered Madame's greeting in a few graceful words the perfection of his accent caused a

whispered remark among the guests.
"There is some mistake; this is not the Englishman!" and Madame said, smiling, to M. Saint-Marc, "Monsic your friend was English." "Monsieur, you told me

"Truly, Madame, I have not misled you. It is my friend's French; it deceives ev-

eryone."
"It may well do so," said Madame Ransome. "I wish I could speak French as
you do, M. Devereux; but I suppose you
have been a great deal in France!"
He answered "Yes, a great deal," and
then Madame presented him to the other
resets and he speedily became the cen-

then Madame presented him to the other guests, and he speedily became the centre of attraction.

He played a little, and then amused himself by watching the other players, and presently sauntered to the table where Madame Ransome was playing, and whose her villa of rold was rapidly inwhere her pile of gold was rapidly in-

where her paid of creasing.

"Monsieur does not play," observed Madame Bernard, a lady of fashion, who was doing her best to ruin her husband by her passion for gambling. Devereux smiled.

"You know, madame, they say that lookers-on see most of the game," he said, bowing slightly. Hester Ransome glanced up covertly into the speaker's face; but it was unre-

vealing. M. Devereux had clearly not intended any inuendo.

The Opera Comique lady played, and lost; the marquis fared no better. Finally Madame Ransome rose from the table the winner of three thousand franca. "No need to tell them, magaine, said the Opera Comique lady, with a broad sneer; they would hardly care to remain." They went out, still chattering and ges-ticulating furiously—all but Saint-Marc and Dare Devereux. "Monsieur," said Madame Ransome to the former gentleman, will you withdraw

one moment?" Saint-Marc bowed and quitted the room.
Then Hester Ransome turned to Dev-

"M. Dare Devereux, how have I injured you that you should bring upon me sand ruin?"

"I will answer your question by another, madame. Have you already forgotten ercival Claremont?"

A strange cry broke from the woman's ips. She reeled back two or three steps, at recovering brealf almost directly, aid figragly.

you? I did him no wrong!"
"He was my nearest and dearest friend.
I loved him better than I loved my life.
You ruined him, and drove him to his death."

He turned towards the door. Hester ansome stepped before him.
"Hold!" she said, and for an instant the

"Hold!" she said, and for an instant the black eyes of the woman, the deep-blue eyes of the man, met full. "Is it to be war to the knife between you and me?" "War to the knife," he answered steadily. She drew back.
"War to the knife then be it," she said

through her set teeth; "and let us see, Dare Devereux, in this 'game of skill' Dare Devereux, in this 'game of ski which hand will win—yours or mine!"
"I accept the combat," said the your man ca!mly, "and will abide the issues.
Adieu, madame."

And he howed and went out Before noon the next day the aparte-nent in the Parc Monceau knew Hester Ransome no more. Forgotten world, but graven in stone on the memoof the man and woman who stood face to face that night as deadly foes. War to the knife! Which hand would plant the

death-blow-the man's or the woman's. CHAPTER III. AT THE GROSVENOR.

In her air there was a something of command, As tho' she moved the lady of the land.

—Byron.

"And who is Vida Carolan?" It is nearly fourteen years since Percival Claremont was laid in the Paris Morgue, and Dare Devereux by a few words shattered the fortunes of Hester Ransome, and the scene is not now in

Paris, and the month is not June, but Leaning upon one of the marble consoles in the Grosvenor Gallery, the Hon. Roke-by Danvers asked the above recorded question of his friend Laurence Summers, tho, after surveying through an eyeglas the fashionable throng had just given ut-terance to these words: "I hope Vida Carolan will be here."

Laurence stared with as much surprise as if he had been asked who Gladstone was; then his brow cleared, and an indulgent smile irradiated his features

"Poor devil!" he said compassionately,
"I forgot that you had only just turned
up from Berlin, and Vida Carolan only rose on the horizon a month ago, so of course you couldn't know who she is.—
Well, in one sense I can't tell you, nor can any one else, I believe; she's a mystery. Even the 'slaters' haven't been able to find out 'who was her father, who was her nother.' was her mother; but in another se can tell you something about her. I cercan tell you sometining about her. I certainly know as much as any one knows."
"I'll dare swear that," replied the Hon.
Rokeby, "for you're the club newsman.
There's Beatrix Mansfield—doesn't she look charming! Well, about this Mrs. or

And so at last she drew near the spot where stood the Hon. Rokeby Danvers and his friend, and Danvers drew in his

Heavens!—what beauty. The divine!

brightness, yet which no keen physiogno mist would have called a happy smile.

"If I had been there, Miss Carolan, I

curs, then you are so, Lady Marvyn?

"You are terribly hard on the poor men," returned that lady.
"And overlook," added Summers readi-

"I cry your companents eisewhere.
"I cry you mercy, and in proof of your forgiveness, deign to smile upon a friend of mine who is dying to be presented."
"With pleasure, if so simple a process as an introduction can save a no

plenty of assurance, positively blushed as he bowed before this superb looking

But she looked back over her shoulder,

"Who is that?"

"Who is that?"

"I dare say you have heard of him— Dare Devereux, of King's Royal." The hazel eyes were drooping, and the long veil of lashes sweeping over them gave them a half dreamy, languid expres-

But she looked back over her shoulder, might almost have seemed to frame ag the question she had asked: "I won

CHAPTER IV.

For 'tis sweet to see the engineer Hoist with his own petard.—SHAKESPEARE. ping backwards and forwards while apartment—a woman who, though she looked her fifty years, was still hand-some, and in whom robustness of figure had not degenerated into stoutness.

s had the black velvet.

An maiden flower full bloom—
A passion-flower! A maiden whose rich heart
Burned with intensest fire that ta, ned the light
Of the sweet eyes into a warm dark dew.

Margot; to morrow turned out of a lodg-ing for lack of five francs to pay the

